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VACAVALLEY RADIO CLUB

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VACAVILLE , CALIFORNIA **January 2015**

2014 in Review

The club started out the year without a Christmas Party because only three members committed to it. More than likely most already had other plans made.

Mike, W6MAV was sworn in as President of the club with many plans in hand for the year.

We began meetings at various local pizzerias and restaurants prior to the regular meetings. In addition, the meetings were moved to the Elmira Firehouse because the ramp at the Vine Street station was unsafe. No definite date was given when it would be repaired.

Several VE test sessions held by Jerry KD6WKY and other members at his office resulted in many new local ham operators

At the February meeting, Art, AB6HB and Mike, KK6DCM from the Benicia Radio Club gave presentations on a "Grab & Go" portable station and "Antenna Basics" using a clever training mockup of a Yagi antenna. Both presentations were excellent and well received by the club members.

At the March meeting Jill Childers, instructor and coordinator for the Vaca Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), gave an overview on the program and how it works. Training and plenty of literature was offered to anyone that was interested in the program.

A Facebook and a Blog at was established by Frank KJ6EWQ to bring the club into the 21st century.

Jerry, KD6WKY spent some time in historic Virginia City, Nevada as part of the team of over 30 radio amateurs for W1AW/7 at the Comstock Memorial Station W7RN.

The June ARRL Field Day was held at the QTH of George KK4XU, Maria KC4PGH, and Lauren K6LIV. It proved to be the best ARRL Field Day the club has had because of the excellent host's planning, support and setup prior to the event. At least twenty-seven members and guests either operated or visited the site. Over 500 contacts were logged.

In August the club adjourned from regular meetings until the end of September. The regular W6VVR Net and the Newsletter remained active during this period.

Election of Club Officers was held at the November meeting in Elmira. The only changes were Frank, KJ6RWQ-President and Kim, KJ6JNX as Vice President.

Ten members of the club worked as security patrol during the Vacaville Merriment on Main ceremonies in December.

A few members assisted with maintenance and re-cabling of antennas at Jerry, KD6WKY's, QTH was accomplished. All had a great day helping out!

The club ended the year with a nice Christmas dinner at Fairfield Home Town Buffet and prepared for a new and hopefully great year for the club.

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The 2014 VacaValley Radio Club Christmas Party

The Raffle Goodies

A Good Time Was Had By All

Skip Lawson – AF6HC

With our traditional Christmas dinner on Thursday, 11 December, we once again brought yet another year to an end.

In his final official duty as the outgoing 2014 VVRC Vice President, Jerry – KD6WKY - welcomed some 13 members – many accompanied by their lovely XYLs – to the 2014 Christmas dinner at the Hometown Buffet, in Fairfield.

Our faithful Treasurer, Bob – H6HEW, manned the sign-in table and issued door prize drawing tickets to

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VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB--2013
ELECTED OFFICERS
President: Frank Garay, KJ6RWQ
Vice President: Kim, KI6JNX
Secretary: To be decided
Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Director: Antonio DelRio, N6ZGB
Director: Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Director: Arthur Miller, KI6UXE
Director: Richard Craig, KJ6MIB

APPOINTED POSITIONS
Net Control Chairperson: Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Club Activities Chairperson: Board of Directors
Newsletter Editor: Jerry Bowen, KJ6SCC
Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

Can I put the prize back?

They are out of food.
I'm Leaving!

You WHAT???!

Hey! Where's that guy going with my drink?

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A serious discussion

Then my tower collapsed...and then....I don't remember a thing!

Well now, I hate to spoil it for all of you, but since the photographer seldom gets his picture taken, I thought I would take a "selfie" and use the opportunity to wish all the members and families of the VacaValley Radio Club a .....

Merriment on Main
Security Patrol Volunteers

After several years of having to have background checks made at the Vacaville Police Station for members who volunteer as security patrol for Merriment on Main in Vacaville, the requirement was no longer necessary starting in 2014.

Ten club members volunteered for the 2014 Merriment on Main celebration. They were:

Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Bob Hewitt, K6HEW
Art Miller, KI6UXE
Mike Vieira, W6MAV
Richard Craig, KJ6MIB
Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Jerry Bowen, KJ6SCC
Frank Garay, KJ6RWQ
Bruce McCaskie, N6THN
Jorge Vidal, KK4XU

Having never volunteered for the occasion before I wasn't quite sure of what to do. We were to meet at the Tax Advantage Office on Merchant Street which was used as central control. I must admit, I couldn't find the office when I started wandering around looking for it. When I requested directions on my portable radio, I was told to look to my right. Well, wadayaknow…there it was right in front of me! No wonder I couldn't find it!

I checked in and started wandering around. No problems until a radio was turned on accidentally messing up communications. Jerry, KD6WKY tracked down the offending radio and communication returned to normal.

All in all, it was a fun evening that I enjoyed thoroughly.

With the arrival of a new year, it's time to renew your memberships.

MEMBER Dues	$20.00
Each Family Member	$ 2.00
Student	$ 5.00
Call/Name badge	$11.00

Optional ARRL membership

ARRL dues	**$37.00**

See the back page for a membership application/ renewal

The MFJ Universal Cable Entry Panel

Jerry, KJ6SCC

The Panel

I read an interview in *November 2014 QST Magazine* about the MFJ-4603 Universal Cable Entry Panel *by Mark Wilson, K1RO*. It had some problems but the whole concept is a good idea because of convenience and a common ground point for all cables and coax shields.

Some of the findings Mark Wilson found included; low quality UHF bulkhead fittings that had the center pin hollow to the outside that let cold air into the room. He also found that the "*…supplied UHF bulkhead connectors are not very sturdy. They rattle a little bit, and one actually pulled apart when I disconnected a PL-259 plug.*"

He replaced the UHF bulkhead connectors with some better ones from parts on hand.

The whole concept of the panel is a good idea because of convenience and a common ground point for all cables and shields. MFJ said they would be correcting some of the issues with it after a conversation with the Mark.

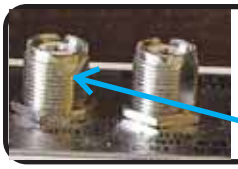
Since I was still working on my new Ham Shack I ordered a MFJ-4603 panel.

When the package arrived, the first thing I noticed was the panel was not square with the wood support as had been noted in Mark's review. But that was probably because it was in stock and wasn't worth fixing. Since I was going to use it in a through wall mounting instead of in a window configuration it didn't matter.

I installed the panel temporarily in the wall and plugged my 20-meter dipole into the UHF-1 coax connector and to my Yaesu 897D.

As I was plugging in the coax I noticed a chip of metal was missing from the UHF-2 fitting.

When I turned on the radio I noticed the background noise was disappearing and reappearing intermittently. I checked the cable connections at the Yeasu and at the panel. Both were tight but when I wiggled the UHF-1coax at the panel the background noise varied.



The UHF-2 fitting was partially broken off near the end in the body.

When I unplugged the cable from the panel I heard something hit the floor. It was the internals from the UHF-1 coax feed-through.

I couldn't find the ring for the left side of the connector among the items that fell to the floor.

UHF-1 Coax Bulkhead Connector Internals

When I assembled the pieces, the fit of the components was very loose. That probably explains the problem with the varying levels of background level.

I ordered four new bulkhead connectors from DXEngineering. When they arrived it was obvious they were a much better quality product. A quick test with the radio proved the reception problem was cured.

MFJ has many excellent products in its inventory, but, they may have a quality control problem in this area. You can have the best product in the world, but if you use parts *M*anufactured *F*rom *J*unk, it unfortunately reflects on your product.

In addition I will be paying much more attention to items I order when they arrive and do a careful inspection. It will also be a good idea to thoroughly review any comments from other hams, and on the Internet before even ordering.

Nuff Said!...Lessons Learned!!

THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

The Vaca Valley Radio Club has proudly served the Northern Solano County Area since 1988. We pride ourselves in providing a friendly place for radio amateurs to meet and improve their operating skills.

We participate in public service events throughout the year and are always ready to assist with communications during times of emergency.

Browsw our website for more information about our club. If you have any questions please e-mail us at w6vvr@w6vvr.net or call 707-448-5665 for assistance

The Repeater is Published by the Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143, An ARRL Affiliated Club. Founded 1987, Chartered 1988. General Meetings: 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM 420 Elmira Fire Station.

Wheelchair accessible

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at: vacavalleyradio.net

Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3
The W6VVR net call is Tuesday evenings at 8pm on the club repeater. All are invited to participate in this weekly meeting on the air. 73!

Additional local repeaters
WV6F 224.200(-)
WV6F 440.025(+)
WV6F 1291.900(-)

Out With the Old & In With the New

Not that you guys are easily excited, but with my 3 QSO's today with W1AW/3 portable station (10, 17 & 40 meters) I can now submit my logs to the ARRL and get that almighty W.A.S. plaque to hang on my station's wall.

Next up is the W.A.S. for PSK31 and after that, JT65-HF. I took my chances in the recent 10 ARRL contest and the band on Sunday (Dec. 14th) was horrible here at my station, but later in the day, the band opened up enough.

Next month, I'm going to try my best with the ARRL's RTTY contest and on January 5th which is the 1st of 2 Kids Day on the air, I'm hosting a young 8 yr. old girl who is my wife's niece from Orangevale so she can get a taste of ham radio and talk with other youngsters near and far.

The Tigertronics USB SignaLink model does work, but as I've found out, using it with my FT-450 rig isn't that great. The FT-450's data port is very sensitive and in working the digital modes, I have had a difficult time keeping my signal clean. The only times that I've

West Mountain RIGblaster Advantage

managed to keep it (signal) clean was when the sunspots were plentiful unlike how it is these days.

So I went out and bought a West Mountain RIGblaster Advantage interface and despite the low sunspot activity, I can still push out between 25-30 watts and maintain a clean signal.

Sometime in early to mid 2015, I'm either going to purchase a FTDX-1200 or a FTDX-3000 to compliment my other QTH Yaesu radios in my station.

As for the new Yaesu FT-991 rig, it might be the upgraded model to the older FT-897 radio. I was reading this month's QST magazine and on page #57, there is a

NET CONTROL OPERATORS

1st week of month-Jerry Bowen; KJ6SCC
2nd week of month-Richard Craig; KJ6MIB
3rd week of month-Chris Jones; KD7TQO
4th week of month-Marcus MacLean; KI6WDX
On months with 5 weeks-Bob Hewitt; K6HEW

FT-991

nice write up on the portable rotator which is a DC control & rotator which is perfect for those field radio activities such as Field Day and the October QSO party event

FTDX 1200

amongst many others. The company that makes it is up in Roseville! For a mere $330, a tripod with telescoping pole and one's HF rig, doing a "in the field" event up in the Donner Pass or some other high altitude location with a light weight Yagi would be interesting. You think?

73, Marcus, KI6WDX

From Pg 2

folks as they arrived.

After a great supper, Jerry opened the drawing for the door prizes – this is where when a number is drawn, the attendee holding that ticket gets to visit the "goodie table" and pick a little something to take home with them.

After this, the much awaited, "*Prize Fund*" drawing – the final drawing of the year — was held, and the winner this year – for the amount of $145.50 was ….. drum roll please….. Antonio DelRio – N6ZGB! WOW!! Congratulations Antonio!

After the final drawing, some folks visited the desert counter and got a cup of coffee to go with their "gooey goodie", and the remainder of the evening turned into a time of friendly conversation.

All in all, the evening was truly a time of good food, good fellowship, and good fun!

And as I close these last meeting notes for 2014, I'd like to extend my personal ***"Thank You!"*** to the club officers and the board of directors for all they've done to keep the VVRC alive and growing this past year.

I'd also like to give a special "Thanks" to Jerry – KJ6SCC – for his outstanding work writing and assembling our newsletter each month. You do an awesome job Jerry!

I hope to see all of you at the meetings next year — beginning January 8th!

OPERATING TIP

Please copy?

Please don't! Imagine this presweepstakes conversation as Elmer prepares to hand off the controls to his protégée:

"OK, when the clock rolls over to 2100 UTC"

"I know - call CQ, right?"

"No, I want you to say "please copy" 500 times in a row."

"What???!!!"

"You might as well get it out of your system. Follow it with another 500 of

"You are" and 110 leading zeroes. Then you can call CQ."

"But that will take a half hour!"

"Sure will...but you were going to say it anyway!"

Unnecessary verbiage slows everything down, whether it's a contest or an emergency communication net. Try to eliminate it from your on the air transmissions. Write down a script to help you say only what you need to say. The editor fesses up to having a weakness for adding in an extra "Thanks" at the beginning of a QSO when one at the end is plenty.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACAVALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely Dues are delinquent January 1st

Name: _____ Call Sign_____

Street:

_____

City: _____Zip:

_____

Phone: (_____) _____-_____OK to Publish ?(_____)

License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____)

E-Mail Address_____

FAMILY Member (Spouse or Children)

Name: _____ Call Sign_____

License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

Name: _____ Call Sign_____

License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

MEMBER Dues	$20.00	_____
Each Family Member	$ 2.00	_____
Student	$ 5.00	_____
Repeater/Autopatch donation		_____
Call/Name badge	$11.00	_____
Optional ARRL membership		
ARRL dues	$37.00	
Total		_____

Paid by CASH: Check # _____

DATE: _____

Mail to : Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143